

Claim Amendments

Claims 1-23 (previously canceled without prejudice)

24. (currently amended) A method of providing online library services to a plurality of users by a service provider operating a server computer connected to the Internet, said server computer configured to hold digital items for each of the plurality of users, said each of the plurality of users having an account ~~with optional password protection on said account~~ with the server computer, the method comprising the following steps performed by the server computer of:

allocating storage to store a first user's information as the user's online library;

assigning an address for the first user's online library;

receiving the first user's account information;

~~optionally, receiving authorization information for the first user's account;~~

receiving a digital item;

storing the digital item in the first user's online library;

if the digital item is copyright-protected, then

receiving license information for the digital item;

storing the license information along with the copyright-protected digital

item in the first user's online library;

examining the license information for the copyright-protected digital item to determine a number N ($N \geq 1$) of simultaneous users who could access the copyright-protected digital item; and

allowing no more than N simultaneous users to access the copyright-protected digital item.

25. (currently amended) The method of claim 24, wherein the digital item is a web page, a bookmark, a document, an e-book, an image, a piece of music, a piece of audio, a video clip, a Compact Disc, or a movie.

26. (currently amended) ~~The method of claim 24, wherein the step of receiving license information comprises the step of:~~ A method of providing online library services to a plurality of users by a service provider operating a server computer connected to the Internet, said server computer configured to hold digital items for each of the plurality of users, said each of the plurality of users having an account with the server computer, the method comprising the following steps performed by the server computer:

receiving a digital item;

storing the digital item in a first user's online library;

if the digital item is copyright-protected, then

receiving license information, said license information indicating that the license is for access of the digital item for a predetermined time (T_{license});

permitting access the digital item in accordance with the time constraint imposed by the license information; and

disabling access to the digital item upon expiration of the predetermined time (T_{license}).

27. (currently amended) The method of claim 24, wherein the step of allowing no more than N simultaneous users to access the copyright-protected digital item comprises the step of:

receiving a request from n requesters to access a copyright-protected digital item having N (where $N \geq 1$) licenses;

allowing each of the n (where $n \leq N$) requesters to access the digital item for a

predetermined period of time ($[[\tau]] T_{\text{access}})[[z]]$

~~locking the digital item from access by the remaining $(n > N)$ requesters during the time $[[\tau]] T_{\text{access}}$) the digital item is accessed by those users who are permitted to access the digital item; and~~

~~optionally, establishing a waiting list for each of the remaining $(n > N)$ requesters.~~

28. (currently amended) The method of claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

establishing a waiting list for each of the remaining $(n > N)$ requesters; and

when one of the N licenses becomes available, permitting one of the requesters on the waiting list to access the digital item.

24. (currently amended) A method of providing online library services to a plurality of users by a service provider operating a server computer connected to the Internet, said server computer configured to hold digital items for each of the plurality of users, said each of the plurality of users having an account ~~with optional password protection on said account~~ with the server computer, the method comprising the following steps performed by the server computer of:

allocating storage to store ~~a first user's information as the user's online library~~ one or more digital items in a first user's online library;

~~assigning~~ associating an address ~~for~~ with the first user's online library;

receiving the first user's account information;

~~optionally, receiving authorization information for the first user's account;~~

receiving a digital item;

storing the digital item in the first user's online library;

if the digital item is copyright-protected, then

receiving license information for the digital item;

storing the license information along with the copyright-protected digital item in the first user's online library;

examining the license information for the copyright-protected digital item to determine a number N ($N \geq 1$) of simultaneous users who could access the copyright-protected digital item; and

allowing no more than N simultaneous users to access the copyright-protected digital item.

29. (New) The method of claim 24, further comprising the step of:
streaming content of the digital item to said one or more of N users.

30. (New) The method of claim 24, further comprising the step of:
suitably formatting the digital item for access by said one or more of N users.

31. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein the step of formatting includes:
initiating a handshaking protocol with a designated device to establish the type of
formatting required to make the digital item accessible to said one or more of N users.

32. (New) A computer system configured to permit sharing digital content between a first party and a second party, said computer system comprising:

a processor;

a memory coupled to the processor;

a database coupled to the processor;

a data communications device coupled to the processor, said communication device
configured to establish a connection with the Internet;

an account establishment module coupled to the processor and configured to establish an

account for the first party and to store the first party's account information in the database;

a database interface module coupled to the processor and configured to store in said database one or more copyright-protected digital items and associated license information; and

a security module coupled to the processor and configured to make the one or more copyright-protected digital items accessible to a second party in accord with one or more constraints imposed by license information for an associated digital item.

33. (New) The computer system of claim 32 wherein the one or more constraints imposed by license information associated with a copyright-protected digital item restricts the number N (where $N \geq 1$) of simultaneous users who may access the digital item.

34. (New) The computer system of claim 33, further comprising a locking mechanism configured to prevent access to the copyright-protected digital item from access by more than N simultaneous users.

35. (New) The computer system of claim 32 wherein the one or more constraints imposed by license information associated with a copyright-protected digital item restricts the amount of time a user may access the digital item.

36. (New) The computer system of claim 32 wherein the copyright-protected digital item is made accessible to the second party via a browser-controlled window.

37. (New) The computer system of claim 32 wherein the copyright-protected digital item is made accessible to the second party via the HTTP protocol.

38. (New) The computer system of claim 32 wherein the copyright-protected digital item is made accessible to the second party via a streaming technique.

39. (New) The computer system of claim 32 further comprising:

a formatting device, said formatting device being configured to format the copyright-

protected digital item suitable to the requirements of a client device operated by the second party.

40. (New) The computer system of claim 39, wherein the formatting device is configured to select a suitable format from a database of formats to format the copyright-protected digital item.

41. (New) The computer system of claim 39, wherein the formatting device is configured to select a set of stored rules to format the copyright-protected digital item.

42. (New) The computer system of claim 39, wherein the formatting device is configured to format the digital item to fit the screen of said client device.

43. (New) A method of providing online library services to a first user by a service provider operating a server computer connected to the Internet, said server computer configured to hold digital items of a plurality of users, said plurality of users having accounts with the server computer, the method comprising the following steps performed by said server computer:

receiving an identification of a digital item to be included in the first user's online library;

including the identified digital item in the first user's online library;

if the identified digital item is copyright-protected, then

including in the first user's online library information relating to a number N,

(where $N \geq 1$) of times that the copyright-protected digital item may be

simultaneously accessed; and

allowing the copyright-protected digital item to be simultaneously accessed no

more than N times.

44. (New) A method of sharing digital content by a plurality of users via an online library established on a server computer connected to the Internet and configured to hold digital items,

said server computer having an account for a first user, the method comprising the following steps performed by said server computer:

receiving an identification of a digital item to be included in the first user's online library;

including the identified digital item in the first user's online library;

if the identified digital item is copyright-protected, then

including in the first user's online library information relating to a predetermined

time during which the copyright-protected digital item may be accessed;

and

allowing the copyright-protected digital item to be accessed during the

predetermined time period; and

disabling access to the digital item upon expiration of the predetermined time

period.